

23. (Original) A system according to claim 21, wherein said location is included in the enquiry message and the location subsystem is operative to extract this location from the enquiry message.

24. (Original) A system according to claim 21, wherein the enquiry message includes a structured data part containing at least one type parameter for the item of interest, the trader selection subsystem being operative to access this type parameter and use it in selecting said traders.

25. (Original) A system according to claim 21, wherein the enquirer-contact subsystem is operative to cause the output subsystem to include enquirer contact details in said availability enquiry.

26. (Original) A system according to claim 21, wherein the enquirer-contact subsystem is operative to receive responses from the selected traders and to make them available, either individually or as a collation, to the enquirer.

27. (Original) A system according to claim 26, wherein is operative to make the trader responses available to the enquirer by forwarding them over a communications network towards the enquirer.

28. (Original) A system according to claim 26, wherein the enquirer-contact subsystem is operative to make the trader

responses available by storing them at the service system for retrieval by the enquirer.

29. (Original) A system according to claim **26**, wherein the enquirer-contact subsystem is further operative, in responsive to the enquirer indicating that they wish to contact the trader who originated a particular said response, to mediate the establishment of direct live contact between the enquirer and that trader.

30. (Original) A system according to claim **29**, wherein the enquirer-contact subsystem is operative to mediate the establishment of direct live contact by interacting with a call setup interface of a telephone network system to set up a voice circuit between the enquirer and trader.

31. (Original) A system according to claim **29**, wherein the enquirer-contact subsystem is operative to mediate the establishment of direct live contact by sending a request to the trader concerned to establish direct communication with the enquirer, this request including contact information for enabling the trader to contact the enquirer.

13. (Currently amended) A method according to ~~claim 8~~ claim 8, wherein the enquirer, having received **[[a]]** said response via the service system and having decided that the response is of interest, directly contacts the trader concerned using trader contact information contained in the response.

14. (Original) A method according to claim 13, wherein direct contact is established by at least one of telephone, voice mail, fax, or e-mail.

15. (Currently amended) A method according to claim 8, wherein the enquirer, having received **[[a]]** said response via the service system and having decided that the response is of interest, requests the service system to establish direct live communication between the enquirer and trader concerned, the service system thereupon serving to mediate the establishment of direct live contact.

16. (Original) A method according to claim 15, wherein direct contact is established as a voice circuit via a telephone system, the service system interacting with a call^{***} setup interface of the telephone system to set up said voice circuit.

17. (Currently amended) A method according to claim 8, wherein the enquirer, having received **[[a]]** said response via the service system and having decided that the response is of interest, requests the trader concerned, via service system, to

establish direct communication with the enquirer, this request including contact information for enabling the trader to contact the enquirer.

18. (Currently amended) A method according to claim 1, wherein **[[a]]** said selected trader, on the basis of the description contained in the availability enquiry, sends a response to the enquirer, either directly or via said service system, giving a **[[URI]]** Universal Resource Identifier where the enquirer can find information about items of the same type as the item of interest that are available through the trader.

19. (Currently amended) A method according to claim 18, wherein the enquirer uses said **[[URI]]** Universal Resource Identifier to access said information.

20. (Currently amended) A method according to claim 1, wherein the service system, in sending said availability enquiry, does not disclose the identity of the enquirer.

21. (Currently amended) A shopping-assistance service system, comprising:

[[-]] an enquiry-receiving subsystem for receiving an enquiry message from a remote enquirer over a communications network, the enquiry message including a description of an item of interest comprising both a machine readable structured data part and unstructured data comprising at least one of image and audio